

CONSTAB BALLADS

CLAUDE
McKAY





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CONSTAB BALLADS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

SONGS OF JAMAICA. With portrait and music
to six of the Songs.

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CONSTAB BALLADS

BY
CLAUDE MCKAY

LONDON :
WATTS & CO.,
17 JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET STREET, E.C.
1912

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TO
LIEUT.-COL. A. E. KERSHAW,
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AND TO
INSPECTOR W. E. CLARK,
UNDER WHOM THE AUTHOR HAD
THE HONOUR OF SERVING,
THIS VOLUME IS
RESPECTFULLY AND GRATEFULLY DEDICATED.

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PREFACE

LET me confess it at once. I had not in me the stuff that goes to the making of a good constable; for I am so constituted that imagination outruns discretion, and it is my misfortune to have a most improper sympathy with wrongdoers. I therefore never "made cases," but turning, like Nelson, a blind eye to what it was my manifest duty to see, tried to make peace, which seemed to me better.

Moreover, I am, by temperament, unadaptive; by which I mean that it is not in me to conform cheerfully to uncongenial usages. We blacks are all somewhat impatient of discipline, and to the natural impatience of my race there was added, in my particular case, a peculiar sensitiveness which made certain forms of discipline irksome, and a fierce hatred of injustice. Not that I ever openly rebelled; but the rebellion was in my heart, and it was fomented by the inevitable rubs of daily life—trifles to most of my comrades, but to me calamities and tragedies. To relieve my feelings, I wrote poems, and into them I poured my heart in its various moods. This volume consists of a selection from these poems.

The life was, as it happened, unsuited to me, and I to

it ; but I do not regret my experiences. If I had enemies whom I hated, I also had close friends whom I loved.

One word in conclusion. As constituted by the authorities the Force is admirable, and it only remains for the men themselves, and especially the sub-officers, to make it what it should be, a harmonious band of brothers.

C. McK.

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DE ROUTE MARCH

IN de fus' squad an' de front rank,
'Side me dear Will on de right flank,
From de drill-groun' at the old camp
We went marchin' on a long tramp.

In de forefront was de gay band,
An' de music it was ring grand ;
O how jolly were we boys, oh,
As we marched 'long t'rough St. Jago !

As we tramped on out de dull town,
Keepin' time so¹ to de drum's soun',
All de folkses as dey ran out,
Started dancin' with a glad shout.

We went swingin' do'n de steep hill,
Me so happy by my dear Will,
Wid our carbines slung about we,
An' our glad hearts like de air free.

We drank a draught from a pure brook
Dat came windin' roun' a lee nook ;
Then homeward turned from de cool spring,
Wid our good S. M. commanding.

¹ pointing to the feet.

To de music wid a good will
We went tramp-trampin' up de hill,
An' back to camp strode marchin' t'rough
De sad ruins of St. Jago.

FLAT-FOOT DRILL

Fus' beginnin', flat-foot drill,
Larnin' how fe mek right tu'n :
“ 'Tention ! keep you' han's dem still,
Can't you tek in dat a li'l ?
Hearin' all, but larnin' none.

“ But seems unno all do'n-ca',
Won't mek up you' min' fe larn ;
Drill-instructor boun' fe swea',
Dealin' wid you' class all day,
Neber see such from A barn.

“ Right tu'n, you damn' bungo brut' !
Do it *so*, you mountain man ;
Car' behin' de bluff lef' foot,
Seems i' frighten fe de boot !
Why you won't keep do'n you' han' ?

“ Shet you' mout' ! A wan' no chat !
Fabour say you pick up nong,¹
Sence you nyamin' Depôt fat
An' 'top sleep 'pon so-so mat,
But A mean fe pull you' tongue.²

¹ It seems you are getting “ beany ” now.

² so that you can't talk.

“ Wonder when unno wi’ fit
Fe move up in-a fus’ squad,
Use carbine an’ bayonet!
Wait dough,—unno wi’ larn yet,—
Me wi’ drill you ti’ you mad.”

BENNIE'S DEPARTURE

ALL dat week was cold an' dreary,
An' I worked wid heavy heart ;
All my limbs were weak an' weary,
When I knew that we would part ;
An' I thought of our first meeting
On dat pleasant day o' June,
Of his kind an' modest greeting
When we met dat afternoon ;

Of de cáprice o' de weader,
How de harsh rain fell dat day,
How we kissed de book togeder,
An' our hearts were light an' gay ;
How we started homewards drivin',
Last civilian drive in train ;
How we half-feared de arrivin',
Knowin' we were not free again ;

How we feared do'n to de layin'
By of our loved old-time dress,
An' to each udder kept sayin'
All might be unhappiness ;
How our lives be'n full o' gladness,
Drillin' wid hearts light an' free ;
How for days all would be sadness
When we quarrelled foolishly.

An' de sad, glad recollection
Brought a strange thrill to my soul,
'Memberin' how his affection
Gave joy in a barren wul':
As I thought then, my mind goin'
Back to mem'ries, oh ! so dear,—
As I felt de burden growin',
Jes' so shall I write it here.

We were once more on de drill-ground,
Me so happy by his side,
One in passion, one in will, bound
By a boundless love an' wide :
Daily you would see us drinkin'
Our tea by de mess-room door,
Every passin' moment linkin'
Us togeder more an' more.

After little lazy leanin',
Sittin' on de window-sill,
Me would start our carbine-cleanin'
For de eight o'clock big drill :
'Fo' me he be'n always ready,
An' as smart as smart could be ;
He was always quick, yet steady,
Not of wav'rin' min' like me.

When de time was awful dull in
De ole borin' Dépôt-school,
An' me face was changed an' sullen,
An' I kicked against de rule,
He would speak to me so sweetly,
Tellin' me to bear my fate,

An' his lovin' words completely
Helped me to forget de hate.

An' my heart would start a-pinin'
Ef, when one o'clock came roun',
He was not beside me dinin',
But be'n at some duty boun':
Not a t'ing could sweet me eatin',
Wid my Bennie 'way from me;
Strangely would my heart be beatin'
Tell I knew dat he was free.

When at last he came to table,
Neider one could ever bate
Tell in some way we were able
To eke out each udder plate:
All me t'oughts were of my frennie
Then an' in de after days;
Ne'er can I forget my Bennie
Wid him nice an' pleasant ways.

In de evenin' we went walkin',
An' de sweet sound of his voice,
As we laughed or kept a-talkin',
Made my lovin' heart rejoice:
Full of happiness we strolled on,
In de closin' evenin' light,
Where de stately Cobre¹ rolled on
Gurglin', murm'rin' in de night;

Where de rushin' cánal waters
Splashed t'rough fields of manchinic,

¹ the river at Spanish Town.

Wid deir younger tender daughters
Grow'n' togeder, lush an' t'ick,
Round' de mudder tall an' slumber
Wid her scalloped leaves o' blue,
In de evenin' light a-limber,
Or a-tossin' to an' fro.

Back to barracks slowly strollin',¹
Leavin' de enticin' soun'
O' de Cobre proudly rollin'
T'rough de old deserted town;
Pas' de level well-kept meadows
O' de spacious prison-land,
Where de twilight's fallin' shadows
Scattered at de moon's command.

So we passed 'long, half unwillin',
T'rough de yawnin' barrack-gate,
Our poo' hearts wid disdain fillin'
O' de life we'd larnt to hate;
Visions of a turgid ocean
Of our comrades' noise an' woes,
An' a ne'er-ceasin' commotion
Sorrowfully 'fo' us rose.

We mixed in de tumult, waitin'
Fe de moment o' release,
De disorder never 'batin',
Never 'batin' in de leas';
Wid de anger in us growin',
We grew vexed from black to blue,

¹ we slowly strolled.

All de hot blood t'rough us flowin',
As we hungered for tattoo.

While some o' de men were strong in
Rum o' Wray an' Nephew fame,
We sat do'n wid ceaseless longin'
Till at last de tattoo came :
Jes' then we were no more snappy,
But be'n even in fe fun ;
Once again we felt quite happy
After de roll-call was done.

Claspin' of our hands togeder,
Each to each we told good-night,
Dreamed soon o' life's broken ledder
An' de wul's perplexin' fight,
Of de many souls a-weepin'
Burdened do'n wid care an' strife,
While we sweetly lay a-sleepin',
Yet would grumble 'bout our life.

Once his cot was next beside me,
But dere came misfortune's day
When de pleasure was denied me,
For de sergeant moved him 'way :
I played not fe mind de movin'
Though me heart wid grief be'n full ;
'Twas but one kin' o' de provin'
O' de ways o' dis ya wul'.¹

¹ The reference is to "Whe' fe do?" one of the author's poems in *Songs of Jamaica*.

'Fo' we tu'n good, came de warnin'
O' de rousin' bugle-soun',
An' you'd see us soon a marnin'
To de bat'-house hurryin' down,
Leavin' udders yawnin', fumblin',
Wid deir limbs all stiff an' ole,
Or 'pon stretchin' out an' grumblin',
Say'n' de water be'n too col'.

In a jiffy we were washin',
Jeerin' dem, de lazy type,
All about us water dashin'
Out o' de ole-fashion' pipe:
In a lee while we were endin',—
Dere was not much time to kill,—
Arms an' bay'nets wanted tendin'
'Fo' de soon-a-marnin' drill.

So we spent five months togeder,
He was ever staunch an' true
In sunshine or rainy weader,
No mind what wrong I would do:
But dere came de sad heart-rendin'
News dat he must part from me,
An' I nursed my sorrow, bendin'
To de grim necessity.

All dat week was cold an' dreary,
An' I worked wid heavy heart;
All my limbs were weak an' weary
When I knew dat we would part;
All de fond hopes, all de gladness
Drooped an' faded from our sight,

An' an overwhelmin' sadness
Came do'n on de partin' night.

In de dim light I lay thinkin'
How dat sad night was our last,
My lone spirit weakly sinkin'
'Neat' de mem'ries o' de past :
As I thought in deepest sorrow,
He came,—sat do'n by my side,
Speakin' o' de dreaded morrow
An' de flow o' life's dark tide.

Gently fell the moonbeams, kissin'
'Way de hot tears streamin' free,
While de wind outside went hissinn'
An' a-moanin' for poor me :
Then he rose, but after bended,
Biddin' me a last good-bye ;
To his cot his steps he wended,
An' I heard a deep-drawn sigh.

'Twas de same decisive warnin'
Wakin' us as in de past,
An' we both washed soon a marnin'
'Neat' de ole pipe fe de last ;
We be'n filled wid hollow laughter,
Rather tryin' to take heart,
But de grief returned when after
Came de moment fe depart.

Hands gripped tight, but not a tear fell
As I looked into his face,

Said de final word o' farewell,
An' returned back to my place :
At my desk I sat me dry-eyed,
Sometimes gave a low-do'n moan,
An' at moments came a sigh sighed
For my Bennie dat was gone.

Gone he, de little sunshine o' my life,
Leavin' me 'lone to de Depôt's black strife,
Dear little comrade o' lecture an' drill,
Loved comrade, like me of true stubborn will :
Oft, in de light o' de fast sinkin' sun,
We'd frolic togeder aroun' de big gun ;
Oft would he laughingly run after me,
Chasin' me over de wide Depôt lea ;
Oft would he teach me de folly o' pride
When, me half-vexed, he would sit by my side ;—
Now all is blackness t'rough night an' t'rough day,
For my heart's weary now Bennie's away.

CONSOLATION

I took my marnin' bat' alone,
An' wept for Bennie dat was gone ;
An' after,—sittin', weepin' long,—
Some one came askin' wha' be'n wrong :
But only chokin' sobs he heard,
My mout' could never speak a word.
An' so for long days all was grief,
An' never could I get relief ;
My heart be'n full of emptiness,
With naught to love an' naught to bless.

I 'member de familiar scene :—
I sat out on de Depôt green,
Restin' agains' de big great gun :
De long rays o' de settin' sun
Were thrown upon the sombre wall ;
I heard de rousin' bugle-call
In chorus¹ soundin' o' retreat ;
A ray o' light shone on my seat,
A soft dull shade of changin' gold,
So pleasant, lovely to behold :
A moment,—an' I was alone,
De wanin' evenin' sun was gone.

¹ Several bugles together.

I sat do'n still ; de evenin' light
Passed on, an' it fell night, dark night.
'Twas autumn : feelin' rather chill,
I rose, led by my aimless will,
An' went up to the second floor,
Sat on a bench agains' de door.
A comrade came an' sat by me,
Restin' a hand upon my knee ;
De lantern old was burnin' dim,
But bright 'nough for me to see him :—
One searchin' look into his face,
I gave him in my heart a place.

I never knew a nicer mind,
He was so pleasant an' so kind ;
An' oh ! the sweetness of his voice
That made my lonely heart rejoice.
It all comes back so vividly,—
The comfort that he brought to me ;
The ray of hope, the pure pure joy
He gave a poor forsaken boy ;
In walk or talk his tender care,
His deep concern for my welfare.
His comin' filled the larger part
Of de great void made in my heart
When on dat cruel awful day
My faithful Bennie went away.

'Tis not de way o' dis ya wul'
Dat any miserable soul
Should know a little lastin' peace,
Should taste endurin' happiness.

De harmless tabby o' de house
Plays kindly wid de frightened mouse,
Till, when it nearly loses dread,
Good Lard ! de little thing is dead.
So wid de man, toy of a Will
E'er playin' with him to its fill,
To-day alive, to-morrow slain,—
Thus all our pleasure ends in pain.

Where'er I roam, whate'er the clime,
I'll never know a happier time ;
I seemed as happy as could be,
When—everything was torn from me.
De fateful day I 'member still,
De final breakin' o' my will,
Again de sayin' o' good-bye,
My poor heart's silent wailin' cry ;
My life, my soul, my all be'n gone,
And ever since I am alone.

FIRE PRACTICE

PAM-PA-PAM, pam-pa-pam, pam-pa-pam,
Hea' de fire-bugle blow !
Pam-pa-pam, pam-pa-pam, pam-pa-pam,
Depôt boys, tu'n do'n below !

Runnin' do'n out o' de big barrack-room,
Haulin' de two engine out o' de shed ;
Formin' up into a long double line,
Wait tell de fus' wud o' cômmand is said.

Soon as we hea' it we start t'rough de gate,
Wid buckets, ledder, an' engine an' key :
Joyously happy, with right cheery will
Tramp we away from de big Depôt lea.

Whole line in twos we go marchin' along,
List'nin' de tramp-trampin' tune of our feet,
Side winks a-givin' our gals as we pass
Merrily, nimbly along White Church Street.

At de shrill soun' o' de whistle we halt,
An' when de engine an' all is fixed square,
We start a-pumpin' wid might an' wid main,
Sendin' clear water chock up in de air.

Pumpin' an' pumpin' an' pumpin' away,
Pumpin' in earnest, yet pumpin' wid fun,
Once more again by de whistle we stop,—
An' den de day's fire-practice is done.

Pam-pa-pam, pam-pa-pam, pam-pa-pam,
Hea' de fire-bugle blow !
Pam-pa-pam, pam-pa-pam, pam-pa-pam,
Depôt boys, tu'n do'n below !

NOTE.—The first and last stanzas go to the following tune in F, two-four time : 1st bar ; crotchet rest, quaver rest, 2 semiquavers C third space. 2nd bar ; quaver C, 2 semiquavers A (the 3rd below), 2 semiquavers F (3rd below again). 3rd bar ; crotchet F, quaver rest, 2 semiquavers C (middle C). 4th bar ; 2 semiquavers F, 2 semiquavers middle C, crotchet F. 5th bar ; same as 1st ; 6th, same as 2nd ; 7th, same as 3rd. 8th bar ; dotted quaver F, semiquaver F, dotted quaver middle C, semiquaver middle C. 9th bar ; minim F.

SECOND-CLASS CONSTABLE ALSTON

I WATCHED him as his cheek grew pale,
He that once was strong and hale ;
The red had faded all away,
And left it ashen, dull and gray.

One Monday night he came to me,
Rested his head upon my knee :
“ O Mac, me feel so sick,” he said,
“ I t’ink me poor boy soon wi’ dead.”

I did my best to calm his fears,
He opened up his breast in tears ;
I’ll ne’er forget the sight I saw,
His body strewn with bumps—all raw.

That night we listened to his moans,
The hot fever was in his bones ;
He tossed and tossed about until,
All his strength spent, he lay down still.

Many a weary weary day
In the hospital he lay,
Till one morn torture turned to peace,
For death had brought him his release.

The funeral, oh it was grand !
We honoured him with arms and band ;
And not a man but turned away
Wet-eyed from where his comrade lay.

LAST WORDS OF THE DYING RECRUIT

WHERE's you' tender han', mumma,
Dat would fingle up me jaw
When de fever burned so deep,
An' A couldn' get no sleep?

Where's de voice me love' to hear
Whisp'rin' sweetest words o' cheer?—
Voice dat taught me A B C
As me leaned 'pon mumma's knee.

Look de 'panish-needle grass
Growin' by de gully pass!
Is dat fe me ducky hen
Cacklin' roun'-a rabbit pen?

Hea' de John-t'whits in-a glee
Singin' in de mammee tree!
Listen, comin' up de dale
Chirpin's o' de nightingale!

All de chune dem die away:—
Do you see de shinin' ray
On da' tiny buttercup?
'Tis de sun a-comin' up.

Now's full time fe me to wake,
 'Causen we ha' bread fe bake;
 Git up, Sam, you lazy wretch,
 For de beas' dem fe go ketch:

Ef you 'low de sun fe grow,¹
 Grass-lice wi' sure mek you know;
 S'arch up to de ole-groun' side,
 For de jack wi' 'tan' deh hide.

Mumma, me wan' go a school,
 Te-day we gwin' play tom-fool:
 Quick! Gi'e me my book an' slate,
 For I doana want fe late.

Sister, wha' de doctor t'ink?
 Say mumma a lower sink?
 Lard! ef she gwin' go lef' we,
 Wha' de use o' life fe me?

Sister, sister, a no true,
 Mumma caan' dis dead 'way so;
 Sister, sister, leave me 'lone,
 Me won' bélieve dat she gone.

Ah! no fe her own han' now
 Restin' on me fevered brow?
 Mumma, lay me 'pon you' breas',
 Mek me get a drop o' res'.

¹ See glossary, under "Ef."

Mumma !—a whe' mumma deh ?
Mumma !—mumma gone away ?
Gone, oh gone is eberyting,
But de funny fancies cling.

Aye, t'enk God, me mumma come !
Ma, no lef' me, tek me home ;
Tek me from de awful strife
Of dis miserable life.

BOUND FE DUTY

TRAMP, tramp, tramp, we go a-trampin',
Pólicemen on duty boun'
From de Depôt to de city,
For dere's racin'-time come roun'.

Wid our great cloaks buttoned round we,
Our best trampin' boots all strong,
Kit-bags, helmet-bags in each hand,
We go merrily along.

Tramp, tramp, tramp, we go a-trampin',
Stoutly marchin' t'rough de rain ;
Soon we'll all be tucked quite snugly
In a corner o' de train.

Our light hearts are filled wid gladness,
As we're sweetly whirled away
From de station to de city,
For it means some extra pay.

Passin' cane-fields all a-racin',
Lush bananas coated blue,
We're whirled onward to de city,
Where dere's work for us to do.

BUMMING

Of all de people I don't like,
A chief one is de bummer ;
He bums around from morn to night
T'rough winter an' t'rough summer.

Ef we should go aroun' John's shop,
An' he ketch scent o' rum's up,
You'll soon see'm pokin' up him nose
Wid him bare-face an' comes-up.

Ef we are smokin' cigarette,
He wants a part of it too ;
An' ebery bluff you gi'e to him,
He's answer got to fit you.

Anedder thing I really hate
Is, when de touris' come in,
To see some people flockin' dem,
An' ebery one a-bummin'.

I think it is an ugly sight
To see a bummin' bobby ;
Yet plenty o' dem tek it for
A precious piece of hobby.¹

¹ Many of them make it their favourite practice.

I proud 'nuff o' me uniform
Not ever to be rummy ;
Much mo' fe lower do'n mese'f
An' mek my min' feel bummy.

If people like to see somet'ing,
It is a bobby quaffin'
A glass or two o' common rum,—
Then drunk,—dey start a-laughin'.

I tell you, all my comrades dear,
Dough your pay might be little,
Don't cringe an' fawn 'fore richer men,
Deir pelf's not wort' a tittle.

My pay is small, an' yet I live
An' feel proud as a lord too ;
Ef you'll be men you soon will find
How much it can reward you.

De honest toil is pure as gold,
An' he who wuks a penny
Can mek his life as much wort' while
As he who earns a guinea.

Our trouble is dat those above
Do oftentimes oppress ;
But we'll laugh at or pity dem,
Or hate dem mo' or less.

So we mus' mek de best o' t'ings,
An' never be too rummish ;
'Twill help us many ways, an' 'top
Us all from bein' bummish.

DE DOG-DRIVER'S FRIEN'

STAY your hasty hands, my comrades,
I must speak to you again ;
For you beat de dog 'dout mussy,
An' dey are we night-time frien'.
Treat dem kindly, treat dem kindly,
For dey are God's creatures too ;
You have no more claim, dear comrades,
On de earth dan what dey do.

'Cos you locked him up in barracks
T'rough some failin' point o' his,
You mus' beatin' him so badly
For de little carelessness ?
Treat dem kindly, etc.

When de hours are cold an' dreary,
An' I'm posted on me beat,
An' me tired heavy body
Weighs upon me weary feet ;

When I think of our oppressors
Wid mixed hatred an' don'-care,
An' de ugly miau of tom-puss
Rings out sharply on de air,

Oftentimes dem come aroun' me
Wid dem free an' trusting soul,
Lying do'n or gambolling near me
Wid a tender sort o' gro'l :

An' I snap my fingers at them,
While dey wag dem tail at me ;
Can you wonder dat I love dem,
Dem, me night-time company ?
Treat dem kindly, etc.

Sometimes dey're a bit too noisy
Wid deir long leave-taking bark ;¹
But I tell you what, it cheers me
When de nights are extra dark.

So, dear comrades, don't ill-treat him,
You won't mek me talk in vain ;
'Member, when de hours are dreary,
He's de poor dog-driver's frien'.
Treat dem kindly, etc.

¹ This is a trick of the dogs when they want to leave their master's yard. They set up a great barking about 11 p.m., as if they were on the alert, and soon after they are all gone.

TO INSPECTOR W. E. CLARK

(ON HIS RETURN)

WE welcome you, dear Sir, again ;
But oh ! de comin' brings us pain,
For though we greet you glad to-day,
Once more you're bound to go away :
We grieve now deeper than before
To know you'll be wid us no more.

We t'ought o' meetin' you in gladness ;
But no, our hearts are filled with sadness
To learn *why* we must part from you,
An officer so dear an' true :
Our prayer is dat de Fates will bless
You an' your kin wid health an' peace.

Farewell, dear Sir, farewell again !—
A farewell fraught wi' deepest pain :
De very ringin' o' de bell
Sounds like a wailin' of farewell ;
We feel it deeply, to de core,
To know you'll be wid us no more.

PAPINE CORNER

WHEN you want to meet a frien',
Ride up to Papine,
Where dere's people to no en',
Old, young, fat an' lean:
When you want nice gals fe court
An' to feel jus' booze',
Go'p to Papine as a sport
Dress' in ge'man clo'es.

When you want to be jus' broke,
Ride up wid your chum,
Buy de best cigars to smoke
An' Finzi old rum:
Stagger roun' de sort o' square
On to Fong Kin bar;
Keep as much strengt' dat can bear
You do'n in de car.

When you want know Sunday bright,
Tek a run up deh
When 'bout eight o'clock at night
Things are extra gay:
Ef you want to see it cram',
Wait tell night is dark,
An' beneat' your breat' you'll damn
Coney Island Park.

When you want see gals look fine,
You mus' go up dere,
An' you'll see them drinkin' wine
An' all sorts o' beer :
There you'll see them walkin' out,
Each wid a young man,
Watch them strollin' all about,
Flirtin' all dem can.

When you want hear coarsest jokes
Passin' rude an' vile,
Want to see de Kingston blokes,—
Go up dere awhile :
When you want hear murderin'
On de piano,
An' all sorts o' drunken din,
Papine you mus' go.

Ef you want lost policeman,
Go dere Sunday night,
Where you'll see them, every one
Lookin' smart an' bright :
Policeman of every rank,
Rural ones an' all,
In de bar or on de bank,
Each one in them sall.

Policeman dat's in his beat,
Policeman widout,
Policeman wid him gold teet'
Shinin' in him mout' ;

Policeman in uniform
Made of English blue,
P'liceman gettin' rather warm,
Sleuth policeman too.

Policeman on plain clo'es pass,
Also dismissed ones ;
See them standin' in a mass,
Talkin' 'bout them plans :
Policeman " struck off de strengt'
Physical unfit,"
Hear them chattin' dere at lengt'
'Bout a diffran' kit.

When you want meet a surprise,
Tek de Papine track ;
Dere some things will meet you' eyes
Mek you tu'n you' back :
When you want to see mankind
Of " class " family
In a way degra' them mind,
Go 'p deh, you will see.

When you want a pleasant drive,
Tek Hope Gardens line ;
I can tell you, man alive,
It is jolly fine :
Ef you want to feel de fun,
You mus' only wait
Until when you're comin' do'n
An' de tram is late.

DISILLUSIONED¹

CAN you leave me so, my Dan,
Can you leave you' little Fan
'Ter all o' me lub fe you?—
An' my heart is still true, true.

Can you leave me, leave me so,
Full me heart wid grief an' woe,
Leave me to a bitter fate,
When I'm in dis awful state?

'Member you de days gone by
When for me you said you'd die?
How you let me see you' heart,
Vowing we could never part?

'Member you my foolish pride
When we be'n up mountain-side?
How you go do'n 'pon you' knee,
Sayin' you'd be true to me?

An' I followed you away
Do'n to dis ya dreary bay;
Fool to lef' me mudder's home,
When she said me shouldn' come!

¹ Sequel to "My Pretty Dan" in *Songs of Jamaica*.

Now, sake ob a to'n-bred miss,
You mus' treat me laka dis !
Tramplin' me under you' feet,
Tu'nin' me out in de street.

Will she warm you when you're chill ?
Will you get of lub you' fill ?
Will she starve herse'f fe you,
As I always use' fe do ?

Will a to'n gal go bare-feet,
Jes' fe try mek two ends meet ?
Will she car' water an' wash,
Jes' fe help out you' lee cash ?

Is she sweet an' undefile'
As you took me, jes' a chil',
'Fo' I knew about de wul',
Gave to you my pure pure soul ?

Will you leave me all forlorn
'Fo' de lilly baby's born ?—
Who wi' eber tek me in
Wid dis dreadful load o' sin ?

Foolish, foolish young gals who
T'ink a constab could be true !
Foolish, foolish every one
Who will trus' a póliceman !

Dem wi' ondly try fe rob
All de good you mighta hab ;
An' 'fo' you can count de cost,
You wi' find you'se'f lost, lost.

Will you leave me, heartless Dan,
For a risky to'n woman ?
When I'm burdened do'n wid woe,
Will you leave me, leave me so ?

COTCH DONKEY

Ko how de jackass
Lay do'n in de road ;
An' him ondly car'
Little bit o' load.

Kue, jackass, git up !
'Tan' up 'pon you' foot !
Dis ya load no load,
You's a lazy brut'.

Me no know wha' mek
Pa won' swop you too ;
For dere's not a t'ing
Wut while you can do.

Ef you car' no load,
It is all de same ;
Hamper on or no,
'Tis de ushal game.

Póliceman a come
Fe go mek a row,
All because o' you
Wid you' wutless now.

“ See ya, Sah, no min’,
Dis a fe me luck ;
De jackass is bad,
Him no wan’ fe wuk.

“ ‘ Tek de hamper off ? ’
Him no hab no cut :
Me deh tell you say
De jackass no wut.

“ Lard ! me Gahd o’ me !
Him got one lee ’cratch :
Dat is not’in’, Sah,
For him always cotch.

Do, Sah, let me off,
Ef fe te-day one¹ ;
For a no de ’cratch
Cause him fe lay do’n.”

Now because o’ you
Dem gone bring me up ;²
An’ wha’ hu’t me mos’,
You caan’ wuk a tup.

Ef dem summons me,
Mek me pay few mac,
Dat caan’ mek me ’top
Wuk you wid sore back.

¹ Just this once.

² They have gone to get out a summons.

ME WHOPPIN' BIG-TREE BOY

I'm aweary weary standin', wid me heart chock-full o'
grief,
An' a great lump in me bosom, an' A canna' get
relief:
Walkin' up an' do'n de road, I see a whoppin' Syrian-
boy,
An' I grudge him, yes I grudge him for his heart so
full o' joy.

'Twas a hot, hot day o' brain-work, an' me heart was
sick an' sad,
As I staggered 'long de car-line, but de boy's cheek
made me glad:
Wid his han's dem set akimbo in a mannish sort o'
way,
Said he "Do wha' it you like, but A wi' wuk no mo'
te-day."

An' de Syrian grew astonished as he looked upon his
load,
Which de whoppin' big-tree boy had tumbled in de
middle road:
He was boun' fe Lawrence Tavern, business called
him dere to-night,
An' he begged his ole-time carrier jes' to help him
out his plight.

“ Nummo wuk at all fe me is my determination still ;
Me no care damn wha' you say, an' you can jes' do
wha' you will :

Me deh go right back to to'n, yah, underneat' me old
big-tree ;

All dem boys wid eboe-light dem, dem is waitin' deh
fe me.

“ Now I'm free fe talk abouten all de people whe' you
rob,

How you sell wha' no wut gill self to black naygur for
a bob ;

But me eboe-light wi' sure talk, of dat you can have
no doubt,

Fe revenge de quantity o' poor poor people you play out.

“ Jes' becausen say dem poo' so, an' t'rough poverty
dem mus'

Tek a couple o' t'ings from you dat you're trick
enough fe trus',

You robbin' dem so badly;¹ but A sorry fe you
dough,

How we boys beneat' de big-tree really mean fe mek
you know.”

Then I roared, I roared with laughter, although
posted on my beat,

Till I half forgot de sore pain in me bosom an' my feet :

Ah ! I wish I knew a little, jes' a little of de joy

Dat Nature has bestowed on you, my whoppin' big-
tree boy.

¹ This should be read almost as if it were a question.

A RECRUIT ON THE CORPY

ME an' de corpy drink we rum,
An' corpy larn me how fe bum ;
Last night me gie 'm de last-last tup,
Yet now him come an' bring me up.

He'll carry me 'fo' officer,
An' rake up' t'ings fe charge me for ;
An' all because dese couple days
Me couldn' gie 'm de usual raise.

Last night, when it come to roll-call,
Dis corpy couldn' 'ten' at all :
We didn' mek de S.M. see 'm,
But only put things 'traight fe him.

An' we, like big fools, be'n deh fret
Ober de corpy drunk to deat' :
We all treat him so very kin',
Aldough him ha' such dutty min'.

We tek him drunken off de car,
We tek him drunken out de bar,
We wake him drunken 'pon him guard,
An' yet we neber claim reward.

All bad contráry things me do,
Corpy see me an' let me go ;
But 'causen me no ha' a tup,
Fe not'in' 'tall him bring me up.

PAY-DAY

DERE's a little anxious crowd
Jes' outside de barrack gate,
All a-t'inkin' deir own way
Dat de pay is kept back late :
Faces of all types an' shades,
Brown an' yaller, black an' gray,
Dey are waitin', waitin' dere,
For it's pólíceman pay-day.

Clearly seen among dem all
Is a colourless white face
Anxious more dan every one,
Fine type of an alien race :
He is waitin' for some cash
On de goods trust' tarra day,—
Our good frien' de Syrian,—
For it's policeman pay-day.

Wid a lee piece of old clot'
'Pon her curly glossy hair,
Print frock an' old bulldog boots
Tatters all t'rough wear an' tear,
She is waitin', ober-bex',
Our mess-woman, mudder Mell,
An' 'twould grieve you' heart to hear
'Bouten wha' she's got to tell.

Six long fortnight come an' gone
Since some constab hol' her up,
An', wid all de try she try,
She can neber get a tup :
“ Me wi' tell Inspector F——
'Bout de 'ole o' i' to-day,
An' den me wi' really see
Ef him caan' boun' dem fe pay.

“ Man dem, wid dem hungry gut,
Six long fortnight nyam me rash ;
Not a gill me caan' get when
Chiny dah dun fe him cash
Fe de plenty t'ings me trus',
Sal' fish, pork, an' flour, an' rice,
Onion an' ingredients,
Jes' fe mek de brukfus' nice.”

See de waitin' midnight girl
Wid her saucy cock-up lips,
An' her strongly-built black hands
Pressed against her rounded hips :
She has passed de bound'ry line,
An' her womanhood is sold ;
Wonder not then, as you gaze,
Dat, though young, she looks so bold.

Once she roamed de country woods
Wid a free an' stainless soul,
But she left for Kingston's slums,
Gave herself up to de wul' :

She has trod de downward course,
Never haltin' on de way ;
Dere's no better time for her
Dan a póliceman pay-day.

Waits de slimber ball-pan man,
Waits de little ice-cream lad,
Waits our washerwoman Sue,—
All deh chat how pólice bad ;
Each one sayin' police vile,
Yet deir faces all betray
Dat for dem dere's no rag time
Laka policeman pay-day.

Inside in de ord'ly room
Things are movin' very fine ;
Constab standin' in a row
Hea' de jinglin' o' de coin ;
Constab wid a solemn face,
Constab only full o' fun,
Marchin' in de ord'ly room
As dem name call one by one.

Quick march !—halt !—a sharp right tu'n,
Wid de right han' smart salute,
All attention poker-stiff,
An' a-standin' grave an' mute :
Office-clerk calls out de name,
Officer hands de amount
To Sa'an' Major standin' by,
Who gives it a second count.

'Ter all de formalities,
Dis an' dat an' warra not,
Salute,—'tion,—right about turn,—
Den de precious pay is got :
Lee gone to de réward fund
T'rough a blot' defaulter-sheet,
Run do'n by sub-officers,
Or caught sleepin' on dem beat ;

Den dere's somet'ing gone fe kit ;
Uniform mus' smart an' nice,
Else de officer won' t'ink
Dat a bobby's wutten price.
All dem way de money go ;
So de payin'-out fe some,
When de fortnight dem come roun',
Bégin in-a ord'ly room.

Now comes payin' up de debts
To de miscellaneous crowd
Waitin' by de barrack-gate,
Chattin', chattin' very loud :
Payin', payin' all de time,
From a poun' do'n to a gill,
Whole fortnight-pay partly done,
Yet rum-money lef' back still.

Strollin' t'rough de gate at night,
Drinkin' Finzi tell dead drunk,
Barely standin' at tattoo,—
After¹ tumblin' in-a bunk ;

¹ Afterwards.

All de two-an'-four is done,
So-so trust nong ebery day
Tell de fortnight comes again
An' we get de little pay.

THE APPLE-WOMAN'S COMPLAINT

WHILE me deh walk 'long in de street,
Policeman's yawnin' on his beat ;
An' dis de wud him chiefta'n say—
Me mus'n' car' me apple-tray.

Ef me no wuk, me boun' fe tief ;
S'pose dat will please de pólíce chief !
De prison dem mus' be wan' full,¹
Mek dem's 'pon we like ravin' bull.

Black nigger wukin' laka cow
An' wipin' sweat-drops from him brow,
Dough him is dyin' sake o' need,
P'lice an' dem headman boun' fe feed.

P'lice an' dem headman gamble too,
Dey shuffle card an' bet fe true ;
Yet ef me Charlie gamble,—well,
Dem try fe 'queeze him laka hell.

De headman fe de town police
Mind² neber know a little peace,

¹ The prisons must want occupants, and that is why they are down upon us like angry bulls.

² The mind of the chief of the town police is never happy, except, etc.

'Cep' when him an' him heartless ban'
Hab sufferin' nigger in dem han'.

Ah son-son ! dough you 're bastard, yah,
An' dere's no one you can call pa,
Jes' try to ha' you' mudder's min'
An' Police Force you'll neber jine.

But how judge believe pólícemen,
Dem dutty mout' wid lyin' stain' ?
While we go batterin' along
Dem doin' we all sort o' wrong.

We hab fe barter-out we soul
To lib t'rough dis ungodly wul';—
O massa Jesus ! don't you see
How pólíce is oppressin' we ?

Dem wan' fe see we in de street
Dah foller dem all 'pon dem beat ;
An' after, 'dout a drop o' shame,
Say we be'n dah solicit dem.

Ah massa Jesus ! in you' love
Jes' look do'n from you' t'rone above,
An' show me how a poo' weak gal
Can lib good life in dis ya wul'.

KNUTSFORD PARK RACES

BATCH o' p'licemen, lookin' fine,
Tramp away to de car line ;
No more p'olicemen can be
Smart as those from Half Way Tree :
Happy, all have happy faces,
For 'tis Knutsford Park big races.

No room in de tram fe stan' :
" Oh ! de races will be gran',—
Wonder ef good luck we'll hab,
Get fe win a couple bob !"
Joyous, only joyous faces,
Goin' to de Knutsford races.

Motor buggy passin' by,
Sendin' dus' up to de sky ;
P'licemen, posted diffran' place,
Buy dem ticket on de race :
Look now for de anxious faces
At de Knutsförd Park big races !

Big-tree boys a t'row dem dice :
" P'lice te-day no ha' no v'ice,—

All like we,¹ so dem caan' mell,—
Mek we gamble laka hell":
Rowdy, rowdy-looking faces
At de Knutsford Park big races.

Ladies white an' brown an' black,
Fine as fine in gala frock,
Wid dem race-card in dem han'
Pass 'long to de dollar stan':
Happy-lookin' lady faces
At de Knutsford Park big races.

Ge'men wid dem smart spy-glass,
Well equip' fe spot dem harse,
Dress' in Yankee-fashion clo'es,
Watch de flag as do'n it goes:
Oh! de eager, eager faces
At de Knutsford Park big races!

Faces of all types an' kinds,
Faces showin' diffran' minds,
Faces from de udder seas—
Right from de antipodes:
Oh! de many various faces
Seen at Knutsford Park big races!

Jockeys lookin' quite dem bes',
In deir racin' clo'es all dress'

¹ All are doing as we do.

(Judge de feelin's how dem proud)
Show de harses to de crowd :
Now you'll see de knowin' faces
At de Knutsford Park big races.

Soldier ban', formed in a ring,
Strike up " God save our king ";
Gub'nor come now by God's grace
To de Knutsford Park big race :
High faces among low faces
At de Knutsford Park big races.

Ladies, 'teppin' up quite cool,
Buy dem tickets at de pool ;
Dough 'tis said he's got a jerk,
Dere's no harse like Billie Burke :
Look roun' at de cock-sure faces
At de Knutsford Park big races.

Hey ! de flag is gone do'n, oh !
Off at grips de harses go !
Dainty's leadin' at a boun',
Stirrup-cup is gainin' ground' :
Strainin', eager strainin' faces
At de Knutsford Park big races.

Last day o' de race—all's done,
An' de course is left alone ;
Everybody's goin' home,
Some more light dan when dey'd come :
Oh ! de sad, de bitter faces
After Knutsford Park big races !

THE HEART OF A CONSTAB

'Tis hatred without an' 'tis hatred within,
An' I am so weary an' sad ;
For all t'rough de tempest o' terrible strife
Dere's not'in' to make poor me glad.

Oh ! where are de faces I loved in de past,
De frien's dat I used to hold dear ?
Oh say, have dey all turned away from me now
Becausen de red seam I wear ?

I foolishly wandered away from dem all
To dis life of anguish an' woe,
Where I mus' be hard on me own kith an' kin,
And even to frien' mus' prove foe.

Oh ! what have I gained from my too too rash act
O' joinin' a hard Constab Force,
Save quenchin' me thirst from a vinegar cup,
De vinegar cup o' remorse ?

I t'ought of a livin' o' pure honest toil,
To keep up dis slow-ebbin' breath ;
But no, de life surely is bendin' me do'n,
Is bendin' me do'n to de death.

'Tis grievous to think dat, while toilin' on here,
My people won't love me again,
My people, my people, me ownna black skin,—
De wretched t'ought gives me such pain.

But I'll leave it, my people, an' come back to you,
I'll flee from de grief an' turmoil ;
I'll leave it, though flow'rs here should line my
path yet,
An' come back to you an' de soil.

For 'tis hatred without an' 'tis hatred within,
An' how can I live 'douten heart ?
Then oh for de country, de love o' me soul,
From which I shall nevermore part !

FE ME SAL

IN de blazin' midday heat, when I'm posted on me beat,
Who I t'inkin' of but fe me Sal?
She is eber in me mind, ne'er a better you will find,
She's me only lub, de best o' country gal.

When I started out fe roam from me treasured moun-
tain-home,
All me wanderin's were for her good;
A be'n ondly fe her sake why dis job I undertake,
An' she cheer me when I'm sad an' out o' mood.

Any wuk I'm put to do, me jes' feel she's wid me too,
Biddin' me fe toil bedouten fret;
An' when all de duty's done, an' me go to sleep alone,
'Tis but dreamin' o' me darlin' little pet.

When me deh 'pon station guard, dere is ondly one
reward,
For I get fe write her sweet lub-wuds;
Den me finish up her name wid a pile o' flourish dem,
An' me seal de letter up wid jesmy buds.

When me go patrol a day, she's me one lee bit o' stay
As A deh climb up Bardowie hill;
An' A somehow favour know dat, wherever I may go,
Her soul an' heart wi' eber be mine still.

Ef me goin' to de race I'm a-t'inkin' of her face,
An' A feel her shedah at me side ;
Ef me eatin' me lee grub, I'm a-t'inkin' o' de lub
Dat me ha' fe her alone so free an' wide.

Udder p'liceman ha' dem gal, but dere's none like fe
me Sal,
Dey can neber trus' fe dem like me ;
And I needn't eber fear, ef I'm transferred anywhere,
For me Sally is as true as true can be.

She's de darlin' o' me life, an' shall one day be me
wife
Jes' as soon as ebery'ting is ripe ;
An' me hab a feelin' strong dat it will not be too long
'Fo' me get fe wear an Acting Corp'ral's stripe.

She's de darlin' o' me heart, an' we'll neber neber part,
She's de prettiest black gal in de wul' ;
An' whereber you may go you won't find anedder so,
Wid more tender min' an' better sort o' soul.

So de day shall soon arrive when de two o' we shall
drive
To de parish church at Half Way Tree :
An' we'll stroll back t'rough de gate, me Sal a corpy's
mate,
An' we'll be as happy-happy as can be.

THE BOBBY TO THE SNEERING LADY

You may sneer at us, madam,
But our work is beastly hard ;
An' while toilin thus we scarce
Ever get a lee reward.

Our soul's jes' like fe you,
If our work does make us rough ;
Me won't 'res' you servant-gal
When you've beaten her enough.

You may say she is me frien',
We are used to all such prate ;
Naught we meet on life's stern road
But de usual scorn an' hate.

Say dat you wi' 'port me, ma'am ?
I was lookin' fe dat,—well,
Our Inspector's flinty hard,
'Twill be few days' pay or cell.

Pains an' losses of such kind
To we p'licemen's not'in' new ;
Still A'd really like fe hear
Wha' good it wi' do to you.

Last week, eatin' a gill bread,
 Me t'row piece out on de lea ;
 An' A ketch a 'port fe dat
 Which meant five roun' mac to me.

Constab-charge, civilian-charge,
 Life's a burden every way ;
 But reward fund¹ mus' kep' up
 Out o' poo' policeman pay.

Ef our lot, then, is so hard,
 I mus' ever bear in mind
 Dat to fe me own black 'kin
 I mus' not be too unkind.

An' p'r'aps you too will forgive
 Ef I've spoken rather free,
 An' will let me somet'ing ask
 Which may soften you to me :

In de middle o' de night,
 When de blackness lies do'n deep,
 Who protects your homes an' stores
 While de Island is asleep ?

When de dead stars cannot shine
 Sake o' rain an' cloud an' storm,
 Who keeps watch out in de street
 So dat not'in' comes to harm ?

¹ A fund out of which rewards are given to constables for meritorious work.

Ah ! you turn away your head !
See ! dere's pity in your face !
Don't, dear madam, bring on me
This unmerited disgrace.

THE MALINGERER

ME mus' wukin overdue,
An' 'tis all because o' you ;
Me mus' wuk hard laka dis
'Counten o' you' wutlessness.

'Tis a dutty sort o' trick,
Ebery duty-time you sick ;
An' 'tis always my bad luck
Fe detail fe extra wuk.

Night off ágain me won' get,
Dese t'ings mek a poo' man fret,
An' feel him could not do worse
Dan fe go join Police Force.

Hospital a fe you bed ;
God knows wha mek you won' dead !
Doctor no know how fe do,
Else dem wouldan p'ison you.

An' me know man dyin' out,
Yet de doctor dem would doubt,
Dough he's weak in ebery limb,
Dat a t'ing was wrong wid him.

Yet you dih-ya 'douten use,
Only formin' like de juice ;
An' dem caan' see, se'p me king,
Dat you 'pon malingering.

Ef a money you dah sabe,
Better min' de open grabe¹ :
T'enk God ! new rule come te-day,
Hospital bud gets no pay.

Me wi' really beat de eight,
But you mark me wud—an' wait !
Your time's comin' soon—don't doubt—
When you'll also be kicked out.

¹ Although you are saving messing expenses, etc., yet you may catch "hospital sick" (sickness) and die of it; and then of what use is your money?

A LABOURER'S LIFE GIVE ME

I WAS never ashamed o' de soil,
So you needn't remind me of it ;
I was born midst de moil an' de toil,
An' I'll never despise it a bit.

" Sen' me back to de cutliss an' hoe ! "
I don't mind, Sir, a wud dat you say,
For little, it seems, you do know
Of de thing dat you sneer at to-day.

If I'd followed a peasant's career,
I would now be a happier lad ;
You would not be abusing me here,
An' mekin' me sorry an' sad.

Fool ! I hated my precious birthright,
Scornin' what made my father a man ;
Now I grope in de pitchy dark night,
Hate de day when me poo' life began.

To de loved country life I'll return,
I don't mind at all, Sir, if you smile ;
As a peasant my livin' I'll earn,
An' a labourer's life is worth while.

As a labourer livin' content,
Wid at night a rest-place for me head,
Oh ! how gaily my life will be spent,
Wid de baneful ambition gone dead.

An' when, after a day's wukin' hard,
I go home to a fait'ful wifée,
For my toilin' dere'll be its reward,
A peaceful heart happy an' free.

An' me children shall grow strong an' true,
But I'll teach dem dat life is a farce,
An' de best in dis wul' dey can do
Is to bear with content its sad cross.

So I'll make meself happy at home,
An' my life will be pleasanter yet ;
I will take de hard knocks as dey come,
But will conquer de worry an' fret.

Oh ! a labourer's life's my desire
In de hot sun an' pure season rains,
When de glow o' de dark-red bush fire
Sends a new blood a-flow'n' t'rough me veins.

FREE

SCARCE can I believe my eyes,
Yet before me there it lies,
Precious paper granting me
Quick release from misery.

So farewell to Half Way Tree,
And the plains I hate to see !
Soon will I forget my ills
In my loved Clarendon hills.

COMRADES FOUR

DEAR comrades, my comrades,
My heart is always true ;
An' ever an' ever
I shall remember you.

We all joined together,
Together joined we four ;
An' I have been first to
Pass t'rough the open door.¹

We four drilled together,
Together drilled we all ;
An' I've been the first to
Flee from the life o' gall.

We parted, dear comrades,
We parted all in tears,
An' each went his own way
To shoulder life's sad cares.

O comrades, my comrades,
What is de lasting gain,
But all t'rough de tempest
A heart of unmixed pain ?

¹ In allusion to the writer's discharge.

My comrades, loved comrades,
I hear your bitter cry ;
But life's pain will end, boys,
Will end yet—by an' by.

TO W. G. G.

COME, come wid me, my tired soul,
'Way from de miserable wul';
Come from de noise, de wild alarm,
To heights o' mountain peace an' calm.

Do you not hear de battle's roar,
De tumult ragin' on de shore?
Do you not see de poisonous bait
Man sets for man t'rough deadly hate?

Come flee de envy an' de strife,
Before dey ruin our life :
Come to de hills; dey may be drear,
But we can shun de evil here.

De northers now are blowin' chill,
De fog hangs dismal on de hill,
An' sometimes fe long dreary days
De sun is wrapt up in-a haze.

De season rain is on te-day,
De flowers all are fadin' 'way;
But dere 'll be sun upon de heights
After de gloomy Christmas nights.

Soon shall we feel de heartening charm
Of country life, de sunshine warm ;
An' see, wherever we may roam,
Wild flowers burstin' into bloom.

We'll hear de murmur o' de rills,
We'll clearly see de verdant hills
Wid here an' dere de peasant's field
So lovely in its fruitful yield.

De helpless playt'ing of a Will,
We'll spend our short days here ; an' still,
Though prisoners, feel somehow free
To live our lives o' misery.

Dear comrade o' de constab life,
I've gone an' left you in de strife ;
But whether skies are dark or blue,
Dis true true heart remembers you.

SUKEE RIVER¹

I SHALL love you ever,
Dearest Sukee River :
Dash against my broken heart,
Nevermore from you I'll part,
But will stay forever,
Crystal Sukee River.

Cool my fevered brow :
Ah ! 'tis better now,
As I serpent-like lance t'rough
Your broad pool o' deepest blue !
Dis once burnin' brow
Is more better now.

All about me dashin',
H'is'in' up an' splashin',
Bubbles like de turtle-berries,
Jostlin' wid de yerry-yerries,
All about me dashin'
H'is'in' up an' splashin'.

Oh ! dis blissful swim,
Like a fairy dream !

¹ A river in Clarendon. Pronounce *Sooky*, with *oo* as in *look*.

Jumpin' off de time-worn plank,
 Pupperlicks from bank to bank,
 Dis delightful swim
 Is a fairy dream. .

Kiss my naked breast
 In its black skin drest :
 Let your dainty silver bubbles
 Ease it of its lifelong troubles,
 Dis my naked breast
 In its black skin drest.

Floatin', floatin' down
 On my back alone,
 Kiss me on my upturned face,
 Clasp me in your fond embrace,
 As I'm floatin' down
 Happy, yet alone.

Wavelets laughin' hound me,
 Ripples glad surround me :
 Catchin' at dem light an' gay,
 See dem scamper all away,
 As dey playful hound me,
 Or in love surround me.

T'rough de twistin' dance
 Onward do I lance :
 Onward under yonder cave
 Comes wid me a pantin' wave,
 Speedin' from de dance
 Wid me as I lance.

SUKEE RIVER

'Neat' dis shadin' hedge
Growin' by your bridge,
I am thinkin' o' you' love,
Love dat not'in' can remove,
'Neat' dis shadin' hedge
Growin' by your bridge.

Love more pure, I ken,
Dan de love o' men,
Knowin' not de fickle mind
Nor de hatred o' my kind ;
Purer far, I ken,
Dan de love o' men.

E'en when welcome deat'
Claims dis painful breat',
Of you I will ever think
Who first gave me crystal drink ;
E'en when welcome deat'
Claims dis painful breat'.

For a little while
I must leave your smile :
Raindrops fallin' from de sky
Force me now to say good-bye ;
Jes' lee bit o' while
I must leave your smile.

Foamin' Sukee River,
Dearer now dan ever,
I'll ne'er roam from you again
To a life o' so-so pain,
Crystal flowin' river,
Dearer now dan ever.

GLOSSARY

A

- A : I. Pronounced short.
a : it ; *e.g.*, "a be'n ondy" = it was only.
a : intrusive word ; *e.g.*, "a t'row" = throw.
a : by ; *e.g.*, "a day" = by day.
a : to,—as in "a school."
a : is ; *e.g.*, "Dis a fe me luck" = This is my luck.
a' : at.
abouten : about.
a come : is coming.
agains' : against.
a-how : how.
aldough : although.
a-limber : gently waving.
an' : and.
'an : than.
anedder : another.
a no : it is not ; *e.g.*, "a no true" = it is not true.
aroun' : around.
as much wort' while : of as much value.
a whe' mumma deh ?—where is mamma ?

B

- ball-pan man : vendor of patties.
ban' : band.
bare-face : impudence.

- barn : born. "From A barn" = since I was born ; in all my life.
- bat' : bath.
- bate : rest.
- 'batin' : abating.
- batter : toil and moil.
- beas' : beast ; *i.e.*, horse, mule, or donkey.
- beat de eight : do eight hours beat-duty.
- becausen : because.
- bedouten : without.
- behin' : behind.
- be'n : was, were ; *e.g.*, "be'n deh fret" = were fretting.
- bex' : vexed.
- big-tree. A certain big tree in Kingston is the resort of idlers and vicious characters.
- bluff : big.
- bluff : insult.
- boun' : bound ; bind, oblige ; are bound.
- 'bout, 'bouten : about.
- brukfus' : breakfast,—the midday meal.
- bud : bird.
- bulldog boots : rope-soled slippers.
- bumming : cadging, begging for gifts. The *u* has the value of the *oo* in *book*.
- bungo : black African.

C

- caan' : can't. A *y* is often slipped in after the *c*. Pronounce *kahn* or *kyahn*.
- car' : carry.
- 'causen : because.
- 'cep' : except.
- chat, all deh : all are saying (how bad the policemen are).
- chicaney : tricky.

Chiny : the Chinaman.

chock up : right up.

chune dem : tunes.

clot' : cloth.

comes-up : familiarity.

constab : policeman ; of or belonging to the constabulary.

Pronounce the *con* as in *condor*.

corpy : corporal.

'cos : because.

cotch : stand still or lie, and refuse to move. Cotch

donkey = a catching donkey. "Him always cotch "

= he always catches.

couldan : could.

couldn' : couldn't.

'counten o' : on account of.

couple : few.

cram' : crammed.

'cratch : scratch.

cut : sore.

cutliss : cutlass.

D

da' : that.

dah : auxiliary ; *e.g.*, "dah dun" = is dunning ; "dah
sabe" = are saving.

dan : than.

dat : that.

de : the.

dead 'way : die away.

deat' ; death. "To deat'" = exceedingly.

degra' : degrade.

deh : there.

deh : auxiliary ; *e.g.*, "me deh go" = I am going ; "me deh
tell" = I am telling = I tell.

deir: their.

dem: as sign of plural, tacked closely to the preceding word. Thus "man dem" = men; "beas' dem" = beasts.

dem: them, their, they. "All dem boys, etc." = All them (those) boys with eboe-lights (eboe-light sticks), they are waiting there for me.

den: then.

dere: there.

dey: they; "dey do" = they have; "dey'd come" = they had come = they came.

diffra'n': different.

dih-ya: lengthened form of *dere* (there).

dis: this.

dis: just.

dis ya: this here,—for *this*.

doana: do not.

dog-driver: nickname for a policeman.

do'n: down. The vowel has a short dumb sound, and is followed by a slight *g*.

don'-ca': don't care; inattentive.

don'-ca': nonchalance; indifference.

dough: though.

'dout, 'douten: without.

drop: atom; scrap.

ducky hen: a small short-legged variety of hen.

dus': dust.

dutty: dirty.

dyin' out: very sick.

E

eber: ever.

ebery: every.

eboe-light dem: sticks made of eboe-light or torch-wood.

ef: if.

ef she gwin' go lef' we: if she is going to (go and) leave us.

Ef you 'low, etc.: If you allow the sun to get hot, grass-lice (small ticks) will surely "make you know" (punish you).

en': end.

equip': equipped.

F

fabour say: it seems.

fait'ful: faithful.

fat: good food.

favour know: seem to know.

fe: for.

fe: to (sign of the infinitive).

fe go mek: to make.

fe late: to be late.

fe me: my; literally, "for me."

fe you: your, yours.

fingle up: finger; caress.

Finzi: rum.

flockin': crowding round.

'fo': before.

form: pretend, sham.

fortnight: pay-day, which comes once a fortnight.

'fraid: afraid.

frien': friend; in a special sense,—paramour.

full: fill.

fus': first.

fyahn: fern.

G

- ge'man : gentleman ; gentleman's.
 get fe write : get the opportunity of writing.
 gie'm : give him ; gave him.
 gill : three farthings. "Gill bread"=loaf costing three farthings.
 good, 'Fo we tu'n : hardly had we turned when.....
 go'p : go up.
 grass-lice : small ticks.
 gro'l : growl.
 groun' : ground.
 grudge : envy.
 gwin' : going (to).
 gwin' go lef' we : going to (go and) leave us.

H

- hab : have.
 hamper : panniers.
 han' : hand.
 harse : horse.
 hea' : hear.
 him : his : *e.g.*, him nose=his nose.
 h'is'in' : hoisting. Pronounce with long *i*.
 hol' up : hold up,—*i.e.*, neglect to pay.
 hound : chase.
 hu't : hurt, hurts.

I

- i' : it.
 in-a : into the ; in the ; in.
 ingredients : salt, pepper, butter, &c.

J

jack : donkey

jes' : just.

jesmy : jasmine. The buds are put in with the letter.

jine : join.

John-to-whit : the red-eyed greenlet. The name is imitative of the bird's note.

Judge de feelin's : Judge the feelings=just think.

juice : deuce.

K

ketch : catch.

kep' : be kept.

'kin : skin.

kin' : kind. Pronounce with long *i*.

kit : job.

know, mek you : equivalent to the slang phrase "give you beans."

ko : look.

kue : hi !

L

laka dis : like this. The *lak* has the value of French *lac*.

Lard : Lord.

larn : learn, teach.

last, fe de : for the last time.

lay : lies ; lie.

leas' : least.

ledder : ladder.

lee : little.

lef' : left ; leave.

lib : live.
 li'l, lilly : little.
 limber : see *a-limber*.
 'lone : alone.
 'long : along.
 love' : loved.
 lub : love.

M

mac : shilling, shillings ; short for *macaroni*.
 manchinic : Martinique bananas.
 marnin', soon a : early in the morning.
 me : my. It is written thus in order to remind the reader
 that the *y* of *my* is almost invariably short.
 me no know : I don't know.
 me poor boy : I, poor fellow that I am ; poor I.
 mek : make ; let.
 mek we : let us.
 mek you know : see *know*.
 mell : meddle.
 'member : remember.
 mese'f : myself.
 middle. "In de middle road" = in the middle of the road.
 mighta : might.
 min' : mind. Pronounce the *i* long.
 mo' : more.
 mountain-side : in the mountains.
 mout' : mouth.
 mudder : mother.
 mus'n' : must not.
 mus' smart : must be smart.
 mussy : mercy.
 mus' wukin' overdue : must be working overtime.

N

- 'neat' : beneath.
neber trus', &c. : never trust theirs as I can mine.
neider : neither.
no fe her own han' ? = is it not her own hand ?
no lef' me : do not leave me.
nong : now. The vowel sound is very dumb and short.
northers : north winds.
not'in' : nothing. Pronounce *nuttin'*.
'nough, 'nuff : enough.
no wuk : don't work.
nummo : no more.
nyam : eat. A monosyllable like *yam*.

O

- ob : of.
ober-bex' : over-vexed.
ole : old.
ole-time : of or belonging to former times.
'ole : whole.
ondly : only.
ord'ly : orderly.
out : out of.
owna : own.

P

- 'panish-needle grass : Spanish Needle,—a fodder plant.
partly : nearly.
pas' : past.
pass : path.

petater : potato.
play : pretend.
play out : deceive.
plenty : many.
'pon : upon.
poo' : poor.
'port : report.
pupperlicks : head over heels ; turning somersaults.

Q

'queeze : squeeze.

R

rag : (such) fine.
raise : contribution.
rash : rations.
rather tryin' : trying our best.
res' : rest.
'res' : arrest.
ring grand, was : rang out grandly.
risky : flirty.
roun' : round.
roun-a : round the.
rule : regulations ; discipline.
rum's up : rum being about.

S

sabe : save.
Sah : Sir.
sake o' : on account of.

sal' : salt.

sall, in them : having a fine time of it. Pronounce *sahl*.

say. This is often an intrusive word of no significance :

e.g., "Jes' becausen say dem poor so"=Just because they are so poor.

Say mumma, &c.?=Does he say mamma is sinking ?

see'm : see him.

seems : it seems.

self : even. "No wut gill self"=not even worth a gill.

sen' : send.

sence : since.

se'p me king : so help me God.

shedah : shadow.

shet : shut.

'side : beside.

shouldn' : shouldn't.

slimber : slender.

S.M. : Sergeant Major.

snappy : ill-tempered.

so : such.

so-so : only ; nothing but ; bare.

soun' : sound.

sport : sporting character.

'spose : I suppose.

stan' : stand.

swea' : swear.

sweet me : give me pleasure.

Syrian-boy : negro working for a Syrian pedlar.

T

talk, wi' sure : my eboe-light will surely talk,—*i.e.*, teach you a lesson by means of the drubbing it will give you.

'tall : at all.

- 'tan' deh hide : stand there and hide.
 tarra : the other. Vowel-sound as in *t'other*.
 tatters all : all tattered.
 te-day : to-day,—usually accented on the first syllable.
 tek : take.
 tell : till.
 'ten' : attend.
 tendin' : looking after.
 t'enk : thank.
 'teppin' : stepping.
 'ter : after.
 them : their.
 ti' : till.
 t'ick : thick.
 tief : thief, steal.
 t'ing : thing.
 t'ink : think.
 'tion' : attention (standing to).
 togeder : together.
 told good-night : wished good-night.
 to'n : town. The vowel is very dumb.
 'top : stop.
 'top sleep : stop sleeping.
 t'ought : thought.
 'traight : straight.
 trick : tricky.
 'trong : strong.
 t'rough : through.
 t'row : throw.
 trus' : trust ; give on trust ; take on trust.
 try, wid all de etc. : try as hard as she may.
 tu'n : turn. Pronounce *tu'nin'* tunnin.
 tup : twopence of the old Jamaica coinage ; three halfpence
 of the new.
 two-an'-four : the ordinary policeman's daily pay.

U

udder: other, other's.

unno: you. The *u* sounds between *o* and *u*, and the final *o* is more like *oo*, but very short.

use': used.

ushal: usual (with the middle syllable unpronounced).
Except for this omission, the pronunciation is identical.

V

v'ice: voice. "Ha' no v'ice"=can't say anything.

W

wan': want. The *to* after *want* is generally omitted. Thus
"wan' go"=want to go; "want see"=want to see.

warra: what. The value of the *a* is unchanged.

way: away.

we: us; our.

weader: weather.

wha': what. "Wha' de doctor t'ink?"=What does the
doctor think? "Wha' de use?"=What is the
use?—Pronounce the *a* precisely as in *what*.

wha' it: what.

whē': where.

whē': who, whom. The *e* is short, as in *wet*.

wi': will; will be.

wi': with.

wid: with.

won': won't.

wort' while, wut while : worth while,—meaning profitable, serviceable, useful.

wouldan : would,—not to be confused with the following.

wouldn' : would not.

wud : word.

wuk : work.

wul' : world.

wut, no : not worth ; is no use.

wutless, wutlessness : worthlessness, badness, rascality.

wutten price : worth his price.

wut while : worth while, *i.e.*, of any use and profit.

Y

ya : here.

yah : do you hear ?—often thrown in without any particular meaning.

yerry-yerries : minnows.

yet : hereafter ; in time to come.

you' : your. The *ou* pronounced as in *you*.

you sick : you are sick.





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